

# The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*"If you think I came to tell you to hate white people, you have the wrong man. Our goal is not to defeat or humiliate the white man, but to win his friendship and love."*

—The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.



by Governor Vic Atiyeh

Seventeen years ago, I clipped a newspaper story that quoted a number of Oregon grade-school pupils on their Christmastime prayers to God.

Some of the children were thankful for their blessings, one asked for a doll, and another asked that his uncle not be hurt in Vietnam.

I was struck by the prayer of a five-year-old boy named Clifton Clark, who said, "God, give me a good day—just a good day." He was Black.

Coincidentally, the story appeared only a few months after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis.

I filed the item in my desk at the Capitol, and remembered it the other day as I considered the new national holiday, honoring King, which we will celebrate on Jan. 20.

The civil rights struggle of King and others, begun in earnest with a Montgomery, AL, bus boycott in 1955, was asking for exactly that: "a good day" for Black people.

As we prepare for the first time to celebrate King's birthday, we have a chance to give it the significance that some of our holidays may have lost.

I encourage Oregonians to observe the day in a way that reflects the goals of equal rights for each and every American.

That may mean attending a community celebration that honors King's life. Or reading something about King and talking about him at the dinner table. Or flying the American flag outside your home or business.

Although slain at age 39, Martin Luther King, Jr. left lessons enough for all of us.

Among them are lessons in seizing opportunities, in developing and using our God-given skills to help humanity, and in fighting inhumanity without resorting to violence.

A Baptist minister in Montgomery, King had been influenced by his clergyman father and by Gandhi, who died while King was a college undergraduate. King was only 26 when he responded to the courage of Rosa Parks, a department store seamstress, who refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus to a white man.

Not only were Blacks like Mrs. Parks expected to give up their seats to whites, but Mrs. Parks also could not eat in the restaurant of the department store where she worked.

Nor was discrimination unknown in Oregon.

A successful bus boycott was organized in Montgomery, followed by marches, freedom rides, and the violence against which King preached. He received the Nobel Peace Prize at age 35, little more than a century after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

King, who earned a Ph.D. degree from Boston University, is remembered by friends for writing many of his speeches in long hand and memorizing them.

Despite King's celebrity, an Oregon minister who knew him gives testimony to his humility. He says that one example was a time when King waited until last to board a 12-passenger commuter airplane, taking an uncomfortable seat near the door of the plane.

In conversations, he recalls, King often was a listener.

But King was anything but passive in mobilizing the nation to pass laws (such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965) and to understand that injustice anywhere is a threat to our way of life.

King is perhaps best known for his "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial to a massive rally in August 1963.

"I have a dream," said King, "that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Clifton Clark, the young Oregonian featured in the article I clipped in 1968, is now 22.

He drives a school bus for the Portland Public Schools, but he says his dream is to get a good enough job that he can plan for his future.

On the King holiday, Clark says, he hopes people will "sit down and think about what he did and said."

I agree.

How we observe the day may set a tone for how much we are willing to do to insure a "good day" for Oregonians of all backgrounds.

## Synagogues urged to observe Martin Luther King Sabbath, Reaffirm Black-Jewish ties

The American Jewish Heritage Committee (AJHC) appealed to synagogues throughout the nation to designate Jan. 17-18 or Jan. 24-25 as "Martin Luther King Sabbath," and "to religiously celebrate Dr. King's birthday, recall his legacy to his people and to all Americans, and reaffirm Black-Jewish relations."

Dr. King's birthday—Jan. 15, 1929—is now a national holiday, to be observed this year on Jan. 20. The civil rights leader was slain in 1968.

To encourage Jewish religious observance, Rabbi William Berkowitz, national president of the AJHC, has sent to some 3,000 Conservative, Orthodox and Reform rabbis a sample sermon, program ideas, and suggested prayers and responsive readings.

The materials include an array of projects that synagogues can undertake to help carry on Dr. King's work. Among them are Black-Jewish dialogues, pulpit exchanges with Black ministers, joint rallies on human rights (including protests on behalf of Soviet Jews and South African Blacks), and fund-raising efforts for the Martin Luther King Center for Non-violent Social Action in Atlanta, which is headed by Dr. King's widow, Coretta Scott King.

Rabbi Berkowitz also asked the rabbis to consider holding study sessions with other Jewish and Black leaders on such issues as the biblical basis of human rights, social justice and the role of the clergy, and the future of Black-Jewish relations.

## King—"a modern Moses for his people."

Describing Dr. King as "a modern Moses for his people," Rabbi Berkowitz said the civil rights leader "did not view his struggle as a Black struggle per se, but as a human struggle against all racism."

To continue Dr. King's work, Rabbi Berkowitz called for a reaffirmation of the relationship between Blacks and Jews. "Far more unites our communities than divides them," he said.

"We must also continue to involve our religious institutions and leaders in the issues," Dr. Berkowitz declared, "and we must all fight racism and violence on a personal level." He pointed out that Dr. King "rejected the notion that religion's role should be confined to the sanctuary," and said that Dr. King's life "demonstrated the witness that an individual can make by taking on moral responsibility."

The AJHC president noted that Dr. King "believed that violence in the pursuit of his goals was both wrong and ineffective. He also realized that the achievement of human rights were dependent on a *teshuvah*—a change in attitudes and actions—and not just in legislation." Rabbi Berkowitz added:

"He recognized that the final goal was to bring an end to fear, prejudice and irrationality—the barriers to true integration."

The American Jewish Heritage Committee is committed to building a more moral society. Its headquarters are in New York.

## Dr. Martin Luther King Day is declared in Israel

In recognition of the first celebration of the new American federal holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Israel's President Chaim Herzog has declared Jan. 20, 1986 to be Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in Israel.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. has long been admired in Israel for his courageous leadership of the civil rights movement in the United States, his frequently demonstrated friendship for the Jewish people, Zionism, and the State of Israel, and his eloquent rejection of anti-semitism in all its forms. His tragic assassination in 1968 caused deep anguish among all Israelis. Only ten days before his untimely death, Dr. King declared:

*I see Israel, and never mind saying it, as one of the great outposts of democracy in the world, and a marvelous example of what can be done, how desert land almost can be transformed into an oasis of brotherhood and democracy. Peace for Israel means security and that security must be a reality.*

In tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a special memorial forest bearing his name was planted in 1976 in the Galilee, near Nazareth; it now consists of over 10,000 trees and is growing constantly as both Americans and Israelis plant additional trees in his memory.

On Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Israel's highest political body, the Knesset, will hold in his honor a special afternoon session, which will be opened by the Speaker of the Knesset and will be followed by a reception in the Knesset's Chagall Hall. Participating will be the President of the State, members of the Government of Israel and the Knesset, key Israeli public figures, American diplomats, representatives from the general diplomatic community, and representatives of every American organization with offices in Israel.

Schools and universities in Israel are expected to commemorate the day with special programs which will pay tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King's life and works.

Other activities are also being plan-

ned, including the naming of a street for Dr. King in Jerusalem and a ceremony at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Forest. All events will be open to the Israeli and international media.

In advance of Israel's own celebrations of Dr. King's birthday, the Embassy of Israel—together with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Commission, the Jewish National Fund, the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies, and the America-Israel Friendship League—will host a special commemoration in Wash-

ington on Jan. 15. Leading figures from the Black, Jewish, and general communities will be invited to participate. This will be the second consecutive year in which such an embassy event will be held. In the first one held last January, several hundred prominent Americans joined with Israeli citizens to honor Dr. King.

In honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—a great American and great humanitarian leader in the struggle for human dignity—Israel will be joining the United States in keeping his message alive.

### Help Keep the Dream Alive

Come share with us in this event.

Singing Talks

Excerpts from famous "I Have a Dream" speech

Birthday Cake will be served

January 19, 3:00 p.m.  
Greater Solid Rock COGIC  
1705 N.E. Dekum Street

Guest Speaker  
Margaret Carter  
Representative



In observance of

## MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

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